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ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether significant differences existed in reading achievement and self-concept among samples of above grade level readers, developmental readers, and below grade level readers. Forty children in two heterogeneously grouped fourth grade classes in a private school completed measures of reading achievement and self-concept. The three sample groups were formed on the basis of reading achievement scores. A comparison of test results showed that no significant difference existed between reading achievement and self-concept in any of the groups. (Five tables of data are included and 32 references are attached. An appendix shows the scores of the three groups of readers.) (Author/SR)

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READING ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT OF ABOVE GRADE LEVEL, DEVELOPMENTAL, AND BELOW GRADE LEVEL READERS

by

Jean Marie Toth

May 1991

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to test the assumption that there would no significant difference in reading achievement and self-concept between samples of above grade level readers, developmental readers, and below grade level readers.

Students in two hetereogeneously grouped fourth grades in a private school completed measures of reading achievement and self-concept. The three sample groups were formed on the basis of reading achievement scores. A comparison of test results showed that no significant relationship existed between reading achievement and self-concept in any of the groups.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To Roger

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The development of self-concept comes from influence of a significant other. Its development can basically be explained in terms of different theories of personality. (Harris and Sipay 1985) There is a plethora of research investigating self-concept as a unitary entity, that is, a global self-concept. Gorrell (1990) however, writes of the more recent theory which portrays self-concept as a collection of beliefs about oneself, arranged in a hierarchical structure, with general self-concept at the apex of the hierarchy.

Numerous interrelated factors come into play in influencing self-concept including culture, ability, motivation, locus of control; socio-economic status; parental, teacher, and peer expectations, to name a few. Any discussion of self-esteem and achievement must include an investigation of the relationship between and among many variables.

Among the various complex socio-economic factors influencing one's perception of self, culture is not the least. The types of achievement which would be valued by one culture, for example, might be disregarded by another.

For most White, Black, and Hispanic children, beginning school presents an opportunity to enhance their self-esteem. Being first, best, fastest, smartest, or any similar superlative implies standing out, being different. Verbal interaction is enjoyable for most White, Black, and Hispanic children.

(Mitchum 1989) None of these criteria is valued in the Native American culture, however. The good of the group means subjugation of self. A study done by Sullivan (1979) on 251 third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade Chippewa Indian students in which the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered, showed that low self-esteem was significantly related to poor achievement, age, grade level, and percentage of Indian blood.

In a 1977 study done by Wicker, cited by Mitchum (1989) the number of years spent in school correlated negatively with self-esteem of older Native American students, suggesting that the Native American students become increasingly more aware of their cultural differences from the mainstream of society.

In a follow-up investigation of the relationship between self-concept and achievement of lower and middle class Black and White children, kindergarten through eighth grade, Samuels (1977) found that the effect of self-concept was a less significant variable as these children became older, suggesting, perhaps, at least for the Blacks, that there is closer cultural integration into the societal mainstream.

In a synthesis of research on self-concept, Beane, Lipka, and Ludewig (1981) point out that hundreds of studies have been done which show a consistent relationship between aspects of self-concept and various school-related variables including academic achievement. In a review of their own study, the

researchers point out that as students move upward through the grades, self-esteem is described in relation to the school experience and the "self within the institution" increasingly. As they progress through the grades, students' self-concept and academic satisfaction appear to decline. The implication would seem to be that schools have the responsibility to enhance the development of individuals beyond their acquisition of facts. The researchers agree with what Purkey (1970) and others have stated in that self-esteem and achievement must always go hand-in-hand; the immediate task to be mastered must be within the grasp of the learner, a situation which only careful treacher planning can insure.

How children perceive themselves has a profound influence on how they succeed not only in school but as a total person. Noted researchers such as Brookover, Coopersmith, Fitts and Adams; Glasser, Kohut, and Maslow, as cited by Stafford and Hill (1989), believe there is a clear relationship between how one tends to view oneself and how effectively one functions in life's tasks, but the nature of this relationship has not been absolutely established. Purkey (1970) indicates that the best evidence suggests there is a continuous interaction between self-concept and academic achievement and that each directly influences the other. (p. 23)

According to self-concept theory, children who feel self-confident, self-reliant, and adequate tend

to be good readers; poor readers tend to have negative feelings about themselves, particularly in relation to their achievement in school, yet the relationship between self-concept and reading achievement is not always clear. (Harris and Sipay 1985) Though many studies have shown positive correlations between self-concept and school achievement (Gorrell 1990), further examination of this relationship bears investigation.

The establishment of a positive relationship between self-esteem and reading achievement has significant implications for those who are in a position to effect change. In a society where the ability to read is vital to the preservation of our democratic values, increased efforts to enhance self-esteem and thus reading achievement, should be an emphasized, integral part of the total educational process. The changing mores of our society have thrust upon the school an ever-expanding role in the overall development of our children. Thus, those who are in a pivotal position to bring about change, notably, teachers, must continually develop ways of fostering positive self-concepts as implied by Strickland and Campbell (1982).

Educators' efforts to simply create good feelings rather than connecting self-esteen to effort and achievement is a flimsy notion, however. This is corroborated by a recent international survey referred to by Schmoker (1990) in which Korean students ranked at the top in mathematics; American students were at

the bottom. When both were asked if they were good at the subject, Koreans ranked themselves last; Americans ranked themselves first.

The hypothesis resulting from a three part study done by Brookover et al from 1962 through 1968 to determine whether a student's concept of his ability in school was significantly and positively related to academic performance, provides an interesting corollary: Confidence in one's academic ability is necessary but not sufficient in determining academic success. His hypothesis was based on findings indicating that students who reported low self concept rarely performed at above average levels, but a significant proportion of those who professed high self concepts of ability did not perform at comparable levels.

Creation of a total environment in which each child can achieve success, however, would likely minimize feelings of indifference and avoidance caused by fear of failure. (Melton 1988)

HYPOTHESIS

To add to information on this topic, the following study was conducted to examine the relationship between reading achievement and global self-concept. The null hypothesis is put forth: There is no significant difference in the self-concept of samples of fourth grade readers classified as above grade level, developmental, and below grade level.

PROCEDURES AND SAMPLE

The subjects of the study were forty children in two heterogeneously grouped fourth grade classes in a private, religiously affiliated school in an upper middle socio-economic area in New Jersey. There were 20 boys and 20 girls. The sample included one black boy and one black girl. One girl spoke English as a second language.

In the fall of the school year the Wide Range Achievement Test, Level 1, Spelling, was administered to each class by the home room teacher. The scores were used to determine reading achievement. A week later the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, "The Way I Feel About Myself," a self-descriptive test, was administered to each class separately by this researcher. The results of this test were used to measure global self-concept.

Raw scores for each of the tests were collected. (Appendix A) Raw scores for the Wide Range Achievement Test, Level 1, Spelling, were collated from highest to lowest score. Using these raw scores and the corresponding grade level equivalent scores, three groups of readers were formed: above grade level, developmental, and below grade level. Raw scores obtained by each student in the Piers Harris Self-Concept Scale were noted for each of the subjects. (Appendix A)

Student's t was used to determine the significance of the differences between means of the self-concept scores and reading achievement scores of the three samples.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this study, the terms self-esteem and self-concept are defined as follows:

> ...a person's perceptions of him- or herself. These perceptions are formed through one's experience with and interpretations of one's environment and are influenced especially by reinforcements, evaluations by significant others, and one's attributions for one's own behavior. (Shavelson 1981, p.3)

RESULTS

In examining the mean for each sample in reading achievement (Table I) the difference between above

Table I

Mean and Standard Deviation of Three Sampes

Reading Achievement

	M	SD
Above	46.06	9.03
Dev	39.83	.75
Below	33.00	4.69

grade level readers (Above) and developmental readers (Dev) is 6.23, whereas the difference between Above and below grade level (Below) is 13.06, slightly less than twice the difference between the former two sample groups.

The means indicated a valid assignation into the three designated groups. The standard deviation is predicatably largest in the Above group (N=29). The Dev group likely indicates the most cohesiveness because of the relatively small standard deviation.

The t test between samples in reading achievement (Table II) showed no significance difference between

Table II

t Test Results Between Samples

Reading Achievement

	t	Sig
Above vs Dev	1.67	NS
Above vs Below	3.13	sig <.05
Dev vs Below	3.55	sig <.01

the Above and Dev samples. The t between Above and Below was significant below the .05 level. The significance level between the Dev and Below was below the .01.

As can be seen in Table III, there was almost an

Table III

Mean and Standard Deviation for Samples

Self-Concept

	M	SD
Above	62.25	12.65
Dev	51.33	18.79
Below	54.60	18.46

eight point difference between the Above and Below samples in self-concept with almost 12 points between the Above and Developmental samples.

Although the mean of the Above self-concept was greater than the mean of each of the other two samples, the standard deviation was smaller than the other two groups. The mean of the Below was greater than the Dev sample.

Results of the t test on self-concept between the

Table IV

t Test of Results of Three Samples

Self-Concept

	t	Sig
Above vs Below	1.52	NS
Above vs Dev	1.30	NS
Dev vs. Below	.43	NS

means of each of the samples (Table IV) indicated differences among samples' self-concept, with the highest difference occurring between the Above vs Below samples, although the differences were not significant.

There were no significant differences between samples' means on self-concepts of the samples.

The coefficient of correlation for self-concept and reading achievement (Table V) for both the Above

Table V

Coefficient of Correlation

Self-Concept and Reading Achievement

	r	Sig
Above	-.18	NS
Dev	.08	NS
Below	-.05	N

and the Below were negatively correlated. The Developmental group had a low positive correlation of .08.

As presented by Best and Kahn (1989), the relationship of .08 between the Developmental sample's reading achievement and self-concept, although a positive one, is classified as being negligible. None of the correlations indicate significance.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study indicate that a sample of heterogeneously grouped private school fourth grade students, catgegorized into three distinct reading ability groups, showed no significant difference between reading ability and the level of self-concept, thus supporting the hypothesis of this study.

The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between self-concept and reading achievement among samples of above grade level, developmental, and below grade level readers is accepted.

Further studies could include the conducting of a similar investigation on a matched group of children in a public school. Although the trend for above grade readers to have higher self-concept scores is seen in the sample, the absence of a pattern of gradually diminishing self-concept scores for the developmental sample and the below grade level readers, might be due to the relatively small sample size. This same study would likely yield results more compatible with the research if the sample population were larger.

The high number of above grade level readers might be an indication of the selectivity of the student body in a school where parents voluntarily choose to send their children. The mean self-concept score for the above grade level readers was higher than the other two groups. This trend might be interpreted as a reflection

of the higher level of parental education and possible heightened awareness of developing positive self-esteem in their children.

The lack of ethnic and cultural diversity of the sample population, a factor often associated with attendance at a parochial school, might account for the lack of statistical significance between the means of the self-concept scores among the groups. Research done by Marks and Lee (1989), by Friedman (1976), and others cited in the related research, would seem to corroborate this.

The reading achievement scores of the below grade level readers, although low, might presumably be lower in a different environment if we are to accept the research findings of Parish and Parish (1989) that low achieving students' achievement is enhanced by their inclusion in a school with high achievers in a class size of fewer than 27. It is interesting to note that the mean self-concept score of the below-grade level readers is higher than the developmental readers, a fact that might well be attributable to the more nurturing, encouraging environment often associated with attendance in this particular school. Too, all of these children daily work with a reading teacher in a close-knit, small, tutor-like setting, with only five students in a class. This might easily be interpreted as a factor in enhancing self-esteem.

Further studies of the samples might focus on the relationship between self-concept and intelligence or

on the relationship between gender, self-concept, and reading ability.

The use of a more refined instrument of self-concept such as Marsh's Self Descriptive Questionnaire, referred to in the research, might well yield additional findings.

READING ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT: RELATED RESEARCH

Licht, Stader, and Swenson (1989) showed in their study of 192 fifth graders that sex differences with regard to self-concepts in different academic areas exist. In both social studies and science, but not in math or reading, girls viewed themselves as significantly less smart that did boys. Teachers were perceived to interact more frequently with boys in social studies and science. This study seems to point out the importance of examining children's achievement-related beliefs in different academic areas as well as their generalized achievement-related beliefs.

The attributions for successes differ among low and high achievers in reading as well as in other subjects. Licht, Stader, and Swenson found that the tendency to attribute one's successes more than one failures to ability held more for high than for low achievers.

Mufson, Cooper, and Hall (1989) found in their study of 23 seventh grade students that the underachieving students have less self-confidence, a factor associated with lowered self-esteem, and were less hard working than the achievers.

A study by Kugle and Clements (1981) in which they administered the Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale and the Dickstein Self-Esteem Inventory to their fifth and seventh graders on two occasions showed that both level and stability of self-esteem were positively related to academic achievement.

Mason and Stipek (1989) reported on their study of

the self-perceptions of attainment, performance attributions, and achievement-related emotions in reading and math of 77 fourth and fifth grade students of varying cultural, social and achievement backgrounds. They found that as students progressed from fourth to fifth grade, their beliefs and emotional experiences associated with their academic performance were brought with them, despite changes in teachers and classmates. Since some beliefs can inhibit learning, the researchers suggest that teachers would be obligated to attempt to change these beliefs as well as to provide appropriate and effective instruction.

The importance of belief systems children bring with them to school undoubtedly influence how they learn to read and write. In their study of Moroccan schoolchildren, Wagner et al (1989) point out that beginning readers view males of a particular background as literacy models; with increasing age, beliefs about personal effort influence performance in reading. Though the data from the Moroccan study provides only one additional cultural comparison, that chilren's beliefs, metacognition, and reading become interconnected as children progress through school and acquire literacy is undeniable. This would seem to emphasize further, the influence and importance of culture on reading achievement. Locke (1989), for example, provides specific guidelines for elementary school counselors which would be helpful in promoting positive images for Afro-American children.

Bozym (1976) did a study of the effects on student performance when their teachers' understanding of cognitive-affective aspects of students' learning was heightened. The 137 first through sixth grade students comprised the experimental group who were in the classes of teachers trained in cognitive-affective understanding; the control group were in the classes of teachers who had not received the training. When compared with the control group, the experimental group's self-concept, reading and math achievement, and attitude toward school had significantly increased. The study did not, however, address the possible long term effects of the training on students as they progress through the grades.

That the affective status of students is significantly related to both short and long-term school achievement has been demonstrated by observations of school programs and studies aimed at reaching underachieving and unmotivated students. Parish and Parish (1989) report on several programs aimed at reaching these "gray students." The programs provided educatonal extras such as field trips, group social activities and oportunities to take Advanced Placement courses. Built into the program were expectations that those chosen would succeed. Underachievement was reversed. The same authors cited another study which found the grade point average of low-achieving rural children whose parents had received couselling to be significantly higher than among a

similar group of children whose parents had received no special training in how to work with their children. Generalizations as to childrens' achievement in school being causally liked to home support as a sole criteria should be viewed cautiously, however.

Parish and Parish reviewed studies which found that low achievers perform better when they are in school with high achievers; class sizes of 27 or fewer are better for low-ability achievers; elementary school teachers who expect success of their students by looking for the positive in them and by building on what they are capable of doing are more effective.

In a recent issue of **The Harvard Education Letter** (1990) a credible argument is made in favor of smaller class sizes, especially in the primary grades. Citing studies of several schools in which class size was reduced to 15 or fewer, the author suggested that concomitant to the reduction in class size came teachers' willingness to try new methods and approaches. It might well be that in learning to teach differently, they were more likely to see their students differently, and thus, be tuned in more to the affective area.

In a three year pilot study initiated in 13 New Jersey public school districts by the Department of Education in 1987, and reported recently in the **Asbury Park Press**, special education students were taught by special education teachers in the regular classroom. Preliminary results reported that educating handicapped

children in the regular classroom improved not only academic and social skills but improved the pupils' self-esteem as well. This would seem to corroborate the findings of Parish and Parish.

In a review of research concerning students' perceptions of their academic performance, Mittman and Lash (1988) found that students' perceptions of their academic performance compared to their peers are important determinants of their academic achievement and motivation. In their own study of thirteen classes of third graders, they presented evidence which suggested that teacher expectation, as measured by specific outward teacher cues, affected students' perceptions of their own academic standing. The researchers point out the importance of sensitizing teachers to functional concerns such as ability seating and even specific methods of individualization of instruction which might well spawn negative self perceptions among certain students. Over 35 years ago, Maslow (1954) emphasized how powerful a psychological force [key] individuals can have on others.

In a report completed by Marks and Lee (1989) on Lee's 1985 descriptive study which reported the average reading proficiency of a representative sample of the country's students in grades 3, 7, and 11 in both Catholic and public school using the 1985-86 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, students in Catholic school achieved higher levels of reading proficiency than did their public

school counterparts. This advantage existed in all three grade levels, with the difference in average reading proficiency scores being smallest in grade 3, but at the grade 7 and 11 levels, the between-sector difference increased. Through a statistical analysis of the scores, the researchers reported that the findings achieved a statistical significance at a probability level of .05 or less. Statistical significance is interpreted by the authors to mean that the probability of this result occurring by chance is equal to or less than .05.

The researchers' comparative examination and assessment of various characteristics of each group included gender, race/ethnicity, levels of parental education, and family resources supporting reading. The analysis showed that demographic, family, cultural, and academic background "...is less strongly associated with reading proficiency for students who attend Catholic school." (30)

As part of the study, students in both schools were asked to report on the frequency of someone at home asking about their schoolwork. The degree of home interest in both sectors was similar at all three grade levels, but despite the similarity in frequency, a striking difference in their average reading proficiency was noted. In Catholic schools almost no difference was found in reading performance between those who were asked at home each day about their schoolwork and those who were never asked. Public

school students displayed significantly different levels of proficiency, based on the amount of home interest expressed. The assumption might be that interest at home seemed to be generally unrelated to reading proficiency for Catholic school students. An interpretation of the findings might be that the provision of a more normative environment in the Catholic schools might in some respects, compensate for less home support. Perhaps the expectancy level of teachers that students will complete homework, lessens the degree of need for home support. This might well be supported by the common set of religious and moral values in an environment which includes explicit study of religion and ethics.

Though the research did not deal with the possible impact of the teaching of religion and ethics, one might conclude that the inclusion of the specific teaching of selected values could be perceived as a more personal, nurturing environment, one in which self-esteem would, ideally, flourish.

It is important to note that high school students who were enrolled in nonacademic tracks or in nonacademic English courses in Catholic high schools read almost as well as those who were. This phenomenon was not seen in public schools. The researchers were cautious in drawing any unfounded conclusions from the data and did not supply statistical data to link the academic emphasis and socially equitably distribution of achievement. They do, however, express the belief

that the phenomena are connected and attributable, at least in part, to the normative environment which encourages all students, regardless of social background to pursue a strong academic program. They expressed the belief that such an academic organization is possible in all schools and is not confined to Catholic schools. The factors not addressed in this study include, among others, parents' motivation for sending their children to a private school; ability to pay the required tuition; membership in a community in which a common set of values among parents, faculty, community, and students exists, and the ability to change faculty and curriculum at will.

A tangentially related study done by Friedman (1976) on fifth-and sixth-grade children in Jewish and Catholic schools in which differences in self-concept were examined, found no significant mean differences for any aspects of self-concept between ethnic groups or between socioeconomic levels. The outcomes of the study could be interpreted in terms of the unique conditions prevalent in a parochial school.

In an investigation in which the reciprocal effect of self-concept and achievement were measured using the Self Observation Scales and Stanford Achievement Test, Revicki (1982) found that reading achievement was positively associated with self concept. Achievement performance seemed to influence self-concept more strongly than self-concept affected achievement; self-concept seemed to be more closely connected to parental

expectations. By creating an intellectually stimulating home environment, parents influence their children's cognitive development and achievement performance.

In Limbrick, McNaughton, and Glynn's 1985 study detailed by Parish and Parish (1989) gains in reading accuracy and conmprehension were four times as great in elementary school aged children who had engaged in a cross-aged tutoring program than those of their peers of similar ability who had not. Further observed were the close relationships that developed between the tutors and their subjects. This would appear to confirm the very powerful effects of structuring situations and providing personnel who help to satisfy the strong need in all students to feel a sense of belonging and love.

Purkey (1970) devotes an entire chapter of his book **Self Concept and School Achievment** to ways in which teachers can develop positive self-concepts among their charges. The initial phase in that process includes heightening the teacher's own awareness of his own self-concept.

The results of a study done by Patten (1983) which investigated the relationships between self-esteem, anxiety, and achievement in young learning disabled students would seem to emphasize the importance of integrating academic programs with those which develop emotional growth, namely, self-esteem. The 88 subjects, all of average or above average intelligence,

were in kindergarten through sixth grade and had been identified as having deficits which led to a significant discrepancy betwen their estimated intellectual potential and their actual level of performance. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, the Sarason General Anxiety Scale for Children, and the Peabody Individual Achievement Test were individually administered. Pearson product-moment coefficients of correlation between all variables were determined for the total sample and for each sex. Significant relationships were found between self-esteem and Mathematics, Reading Recognition, and General Information achievement scores for the total group and for females ($p<.01$). The researcher concluded that higher self-esteem is related to higher achievement scores.

Purkey (1970) presents innumerable studies which show that many students' poor school performance is attributable not because of low intelligence, poor physical condition, low socio-economic status or even culture, but because they have learned to see themselves as not capable of handling the academic work or that the tasks are irrelevant to their perception of the world. He speculates that these factors may also work to restrict participation in extra-curricular participation, an area which works to further the self-concept.

Shavelson and Bolus (1982) detail the use of specific statistical techniques in an attempt to show

the interplay of various facets of self-concept. In this theory, developed earlier by Shavelson and others, self-concept is further divided into specific-subject facets (English, mathematics, for example); the nonacademic self-concept is divided into social, emotional, and physical self-concepts that are further divided into more specific components.

In testing the assumptions of a multifaceted, hierarchical nature of self-concept, 99 junior high students were administered two sets of three tests at six month intervals. Using two measures of global self-concept, two measures of a general academic self-concept, and two measures of subject-matter-specific (English, mathematics, and science) self-concept in a self-report format, along with the grades received in the specific subjects at the end of the marking period in which the previously-mentioned tests were administered, several analyses were made.

General academic self-concept correlated higher with subject-matter specific self-concept than with grades. Subject-matter specific self-concept correlated higher with grades in that subject area than with grades in other subjects and next highest with subject-matter-specific self-concept. The researchers believe that the study provides evidence as to self-concept as a multifaceted construct: General self-concept is distinct from but correlated with academic self-concept; subject-matter specific facets of self-concept are distinct but correlated with academic self-

concept. Subsequent studies by Shavelson and others revised and expanded this view of self-concept, most recently by Marsh whose study entailed the use of more refined measures of self-concept. It appears later in the related research of this paper.

The importance of studying self-concept in a multidimensional way was furthered in a recent study by Mboya (1989). The comparative contribution of global self-concept and self-concept of academic ability to specific measures of academic achievement was done on 229 tenth grade students in the U.S. Pacific Northwest Public School District. The following measures of self-concept and academic achievement were used: Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory in a self-evaluation format; California Achievement Test percentiles of total score (CAT TT), and subtests in reading (CATR), language (CATL), and mathematics (CATM).

Self-concept of academic ability correlated significantly with academic achievement: Catt: r=.52; p=.001. Male and female students' results were similar. There was a low positive correlation of global self-concept and academic achievement: CATT: r= .18, p=.01; CATR: r= .12, p=.05; CATL: r=.14; p=.05; CATM; r=.20; p= .01. The researcher's interpretation of the data is that there exists a stronger relationship between self-concept of academic ability and academic achievement than the relationship between global self-concept and academic achievement. It should be noted here that different researcher's interpretations of

correlation coefficients may vary. Best and Kahn (1989) present a guideline for evaluating the magnitude of a correlation. In their list, if r= .00 to .20, the relationship is rated as Negligible; when r= .20 to .40, it is rated as Low; when r=.40 to .60, the relationship is said to be Moderate. Only when r=.60 to .80 is the relationship classified as Substantial; and when r=.80 to 1.00, the relationship; is said to be High to Very High. The results of the study showed a moderate correlation betweem academic ability and academic achievement and a negligible correlation between global self-concept and academic achievement.

In reviewing the findings of many previous studies on changes in self-concept as relating to age, Marsh (1990) takes issue with generalizations reached. His objection stems from the use of instruments which, he states, tested overall self-esteem as opposed to the more specific facets of self-concept, thereby rendering many of their generalizations unjustified.

In summarizing research studies examining effects of gender on self-concept, Marsh concluded that there are differences in self-concept, with global self-concept scores favoring boys; specific gender differences in more specific facets of self seem to be consistent with sex stereotypes.

In his own recent study directed toward the analysis of self-concept as multiple dimensional, Marsh related self-concept to age and gender. In a normative sample representative of greater metropolitan Sydney,

Australia, he analyzed the responses of 2,266 individuals over a six year period. Using Self-Descriptive Questionnaires which he developed based the theoretical model created by Shavelson and others, a more differentiated examination of self-concept emerged.

Responses from students in grades 2-9, grades 7-11, and individuals age 15 and older were analyzed. The groups were designated SDQ I, SDQ II, and SDQ III. These questionnaires were designed to measure six specific components of self-concept: School, Verbal/Reading, Math, Parents Relationships, Physical Appearance, and Physical Abilities. Other additional facets were measured by specific scales in addition to those common to all three.

Using analyses of variance (ANOVAS), age and gender effects were determined. The responses to SDQ I showed a clear decline in self-concept in grades 2-9. Results of the SDQ II indicated a U-shaped effect: Self-concepts were shown to be relatively higher in grade 7, declined in grades 8 and 9, and then increased in grades 10 and 11. The SDQ III results reflected an increase in self-concept with age for the late adolescent and young adult age groups.

The trend in each of the groups occurred for both boys and girls. For the six scales that were common to the three instruments, stereotypical sex differences were consistent across the three data sets: (a) Boys had higher Physical Ability, Apperarance, and Math self-

concepts for all three data sets; (b) There were no sex differences for the Parents Scale in any of the three data sets; (c) Girls tended to have higher Verbal/Reading (for SDQ II and SDQ III) self concepts.

Though Marsh's findings indicate differences between self-concept scores of boys and girls on specific additional scales not common to all three groups, it would appear that differences are generally consistent with sex stereotypes, as measured in areas common to all three groups tested.

Analyses of size of correlations among different scales and mean differences among scores offered no support for the earlier hypothesis posited by Shavelson and Bolus (1976) that self-concept becomes increasingly more differentiated with age. This finding puts into question the opinion of Beane, Lipka, and Ludewug (1980) who earlier expressed the belief that as one gets older, self-perceptions become more complex.

The studies cited tend to support the existence of a positive relationship between how one feels about oneself and how well he or she does academically. Studies have been presented which give us reason to believe that enhancing self-concept is a vital influence in improving academic performance. The presence of innumerable factors and the interplay of these must always be taken into account.

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APPENDIX

Scores from Wide Range Achievement Test and Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale for Sample Readers

X = total raw score for reading achievement
Y = total raw score for self-concept

Above Grade Level Readers

Total number = 29
Raw score range for reading achievement = 42 - 57
Grade equivalent range = 10.9 - 5.0

Student	X	Y
20	57	60
17	54	77
8	54	65
9	54	54
15	52	37
3	51	69
12	51	74
18	51	46
40	50	76
35	50	43
38	50	60
29	49	69
32	49	75
33	49	68
39	48	70
31	40	74
11	47	65
10	47	67
27	46	47
4	45	60
22	45	54
24	44	70
19	44	54
21	43	62
34	43	77
13	43	65
2	42	68
16	42	69
6	42	62

Developmental Readers

Total number = 6
Raw score range for reading achievement test = 41 - 39
Grade equivalent range = 4.7 - 4.2

Student	X	Y
30	41	60
23	40	72
37	40	54
14	40	16
28	39	54
26	39	52

Below Grade Level Readers

Total number = 5
Raw score range for reading achievement test = 37 25
Grade equivalent range = 3.7 - 1.7

Student	X	Y
1	37	74
25	35	56
36	35	24
5	33	60
7	25	59